

[REDACTED]
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ITALY: Political Scandal

Prime Minister Forlani is having increasing difficulty limiting the impact on his government of revelations that many high-ranking officials belong to a secret Masonic lodge allegedly linked to a variety of illegal activities. [REDACTED]

Investigations of the "P2" Masonic lodge--stemming from accusations that some of its members had been involved in bank fraud--have uncovered membership lists including important government, business, and military officials, as well as figures reputedly behind financial scandals and coup plotting. The press has portrayed the revelations as evidence of a conspiracy designed to undermine political and economic institutions. [REDACTED]

The Communists have called for Forlani's resignation, claiming that the wide-ranging interests of the Masons could only have been kept secret with the aid of the government. The Socialists, [REDACTED] have tried to convince Forlani to purge suspected Masons from the government--presumably to make way for Socialist-endorsed replacements. [REDACTED]

Forlani almost certainly would prefer to postpone a showdown on the scandal until after important local and regional elections next month. He already has appointed a special investigating commission and several arrests have been ordered. [REDACTED]

In another move, Forlani has made public a lengthy list of alleged Masons, including three Cabinet ministers and the chiefs of the security services. If any new information comes to light specifically linking a high-ranking government official to questionable activities of the lodge, Forlani may be forced to distance himself from those involved--perhaps even removing them from office. [REDACTED]

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